



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES.

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After conferences this week between officers of the Seventh Naval District and representatives of the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries, restrictions on night commercial fishing in the Indian River area and other inland waters of Florida were lifted, and plans were made for a re-examination of the Navy's ban on fishing at night off the coasts.

Florida's normal annual seafood production is about 200,000,000 pounds, it was pointed out by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries, and recent handicaps of the fishing industry have been such as to threaten a material decrease in production this year.

Many of the higher priced varieties of fish in Florida waters are caught commercially only at night. With commercial fishing becoming profitable, in comparison with other activities, fishermen have been rapidly changing to other occupations. Florida fishing interests and state authorities have informed the Coordinators' Office. Unless the movement of these fishermen into other occupations is brought to a halt, a permanent reduction in the state's production of fish can be expected, it was explained.

In 1940, the last year for which complete figures are available, Florida produced 71,454,400 pounds of food fish, 99,315,500 pounds of reduction species, 15,473,700 pounds of crabs, shrimp, etc., and 90,968 gallons of oysters and other shellfish.

The warm waters off Florida contain a wide variety of edible fish of which the most important commercially is silver mullet. In 1940, the state produced approximately 31,877,100 pounds of this fish. Groupers, sea trout, mackerel, catfish, and kingfish were also landed in important quantities. About 546,300 pounds of the highly prized pompano were brought in. Under the restrictions now in force, pompano has almost disappeared from the market.

Menhaden dominates the production of fish used for reduction into oil and meal. A greater quantity of menhaden is landed in Florida than all food fishes together.

Also commercially of considerable importance are shrimp, blue crab, oysters, and the sea crawfish which frequently appears on restaurant menus as "Florida lobster tail," figures show.